

Traditionally Muslims were semi-vegetarians. Meat is not a necessity in Shari'ah. Most meals of our Beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) did not have meat in them. Meat was rarely eaten in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In those days you had to personally sacrifice an animal before you had meat and so meat was usually only eaten when people were invited somewhere as guests. There was a companion of Prophet (peace be upon him) who was a vegetarian and our Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted this from him. Once Hazrat 'Umar (Radiyallahu Anhu) saw a man buying meat everyday in the market and he rebuked him. During caliphate of Hadrat Umar (RA) he prohibited the eating of meat everyday. This is permissible for the Khalifah to do because it is only mubah (permissible) to eat meat everyday.

Imam Malik has a chapter called Bab Al-Lahm (The Chapter about Meat) in his collection of hadith entitled "The Muwatta". There are two hadith from in that chapter and they are both warnings about eating meat. In the old days most Muslims used to eat meat, like middle class once a week (on Fridays) or if they were poor (on the Eids.)

One of the conditions which Imam Sahl Al-Tustari stipulated, when he took students was that they eat meat only once a week. In Maliki Fiqh a rich woman is entitled to meat twice a week. We now have Muslims who are eating meat three times a day and then we wonder why we have so many diseases. In most cases, it is our own appetite (nafs) that leads to heart conditions and we should really only blame ourselves.

Food is the foundation of our material existence. If we eat food in its right proportions, and if we eat good food, then it is going to be beneficial to the body. The opposite is also true. The worst thing you can do is to completely fill the body with food.

The Sunnah is to consume enough morsels to keep our backs straight, while filling one third of the stomach with food, one third air and one third with water, is the dispensation (rukhsa) given to us by the Prophet (peace be upon him). At the same time, we know that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not encourage asceticism and he did not like going to extremes. We should have moderation in our diets.

Hadith that shows that our Beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) didn't eat meat frequently:

Our Beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) was not a frequent meat-eater. Most of his meals did not have meat in them.

This is a muttafaq alaih hadith from Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim which is a proof of this:

Hazrat 'Urwa related that Hazrat 'A'isha (Radiyallahu Anha) said to 'Urwa, "Son of my sister, we used to see three crescent moons in two months without there being a fire lit in the houses of the Messenger of Allah." He said, "I said, 'What did you survive on?' She said, 'The two black ones - dates and water. However, the Messenger of Allah* had some neighbours of the Ansar who had sheep which were lent to them for milking and they used to give the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, some of their drink and he would let us drink.'" □ {Sahih Bukhari, Kitab Al-Riqaq, Hadith # 6094

Sahih Muslim, Kitab Al-Zuhd wa Al-Raqa'iq, Hadith #7419}

Ahadith recorded by Imam Malik(RA) that warn about excessive meat consumption

Yahya related to me from Malik from Yahya ibn Sa'id that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said, "Beware of meat. It has addictiveness like the addictiveness of wine."

□ {Muwatta Imam Malik,Book about The Description of the Prophet(pbuh),Chapter on Eating Meat}

To this day, in some parts of Yemen, they call meat “khamr al-mu’mineen” (the wine of the believers). People who eat meat constantly must have meat in their food because they get addicted to its taste or flavor. In many places in the Muslim world, meat was not readily available, and for most, extremely expensive. Do to its cost, most Muslims rarely ate meat and one of the benefits of the Feast of the Sacrifice after Hajj is that poor people get to eat meat for a day.

Another aspect that has changed is refrigeration. In the past, people ate meat that was freshly slaughtered and thus the decomposition was minimal. Now, meat is kept for days, weeks, and even months. Meat consumption is much higher today than it was in the past. Also there is a danger in the unnatural growth hormones and estrogen [a female hormone] used in modern meat production as well as in the dairy industry. Immigrant parents who are of average height are now finding that their children are much taller than them or anyone in their families. Many think it is a good thing and attribute their children’s size to the “good food” they are eating (as if they didn’t get good food back where they came from).

Wherever American beef has gone there has been an increase in the size of the people. This has happened in Japan and in Asian countries such as the Philippines. The average height of an average person is five feet, eight inches. In the Muslim world that’s the average height. If you are six feet and you go on Hajj you will tower over everyone else.

Yahya related to me from Malik from Yahya ibn Sa'id that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab saw Jabir ibn 'Abdullah carrying some meat. He said, "What is this?" He replied, "Amir al-Muminin, we desired meat and I bought some meat for a dirham." 'Umar said, "Does one of you want to fill his belly to the exclusion of his neighbour or nephew? How can you overlook this ayat? 'You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life and enjoyed yourself in it.' (46:20)"

□ {Muwatta Imam Malik,Book about The Description of the Prophet(pbuh),Chapter on Eating Meat}

This is a very profound insight from the Second Caliph, 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him. Starvation is very real and one of the tragedies of modern food shortages is directly related to meat production in general and cattle consumption in particular. It takes several pounds of grain to produce one pound of meat and reducing one's meat consumption is in fact a political act that, if done on large scales, would have excellent benefits for both the environment and the less fortunate.

In the Muslim world today, lamb, rather than beef, is the dominant meat eaten. Lamb was the traditional meat eaten by the Prophet (peace be upon him), although he did sacrifice a cow on the Hajj, which was for his women folk. There is a sahih hadith that says: "The meat of the cow is a disease and its milk is a cure." Today we are seeing evidence that cow's meat is the number one reason for cardio-vascular disease. Saturated fats found in animals are the main cause for one's arteries becoming sclerotic, which leads to strokes and heart attacks. We see that bypass operations are very common for people who have a habit of eating a lot of cow meat. It is tragic because if people would just follow the Sunnah, they would rarely need such common and preventable operations. Allah says, "Eat and drink but not to excess, Allah does not love those who are excessive." The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The best of my Ummah are my generation, then the second generation, then the third generation...."

In most cases, it is our own appetite (nafs) that leads to heart conditions and we should really only blame ourselves. The body is designed to live over 120 years. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the ages of his Ummah would be between 60–70 years. The Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away when he was 63 and it is said that his stomach was completely flat, that he had only 17 grey hairs in his beard and that he had the strength of 40 men.

The body has rights over us. The right of the body is that it has to be fed properly and it has to be given exercise and rest.

<http://www.organic-halal-meat.com/article/hamza-yusuf.php>

behalal.org/health/islam-and-health/the-sunnah-and-health-by-shaykh-hamza-yusuf-hans